



Testimony of Luke Sulfridge
Ohio Solar United Neighborhoods, Program Director
Opposition Testimony for Ohio House Bill 554
11/29/2016

Chairman Dovilla, Vice Chairwoman Roegner, Ranking Member Ashford, and Members of the Ohio House Public Utilities Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify today. I am here to testify in opposition to House Bill 554.

I am the Program Director of Ohio Solar United Neighborhoods and a resident of southeast Ohio. OH SUN launched in January 2016 as a program of the non-profit Community Power Network. CPN programs operate in DC, FL, MD, OH, VA, and WV. OH SUN helps homeowners and small business owners go solar as a community. The community picks a single installer through a competitive bidding process. Savings are realized through the power of group buying. Installers enjoy the predictability of a steady business and savings themselves through bulk purchase of equipment. Five communities in Ohio now have operating programs: Lorain County, Delaware County, Cuyahoga County, Worthington, and most recently Appalachian Ohio. We have educated over 1,000 homeowners this year, and have evaluated five hundred homes and businesses for solar in Ohio this year. Nationwide CPN has helped over 1,500 homes go solar over the last few years for a combined 10MW of distributed solar.

People are hungry for solar and ready to invest private capital. However, the uncertainty of the Renewable Portfolio Standard is leaving many more waiting. As it stands, we have seen 1.5 million dollars invested in distributed solar through OH SUN this year. Other state CPN programs see the “pay-back” periods for solar cut to as little as a third of what it is in Ohio. This is a direct result of those states having a meaningful renewable energy standard. According to the [Solar Job Census](#), the solar industry is growing nationwide by 20% year on year with new solar jobs averaging [\\$19](#) per hour. This is 12 times the national average for job growth. Ohio is falling behind without a renewable portfolio standard. Ohio’s approximately fifty installers are ready to grow their businesses.

Every day that Ohio’s RPS remains frozen is a day that Ohio loses out on new jobs in energy and beyond. Employers are now demanding clean energy when they locate to a state. The RPS serves as a mechanism to allow homeowners and small businesses to help build a clean modern distributed power system in Ohio. Distributed energy also makes Ohio stronger and more resilient. The more energy is being produced locally, the less money is leaving the state and the more we are prepared in times of need. Ohio needs clean local power. We all benefit. Savings for the all energy consumers are also realized through decreased reliance on stand-by generators because peak demand is often also when solar is producing at peak.

Ohio remains the only state to roll back its Renewable Portfolio Standard. It was Iowa, a mid-western state that created the idea which allowed the market to help shape the most efficient deployment of renewable energy. Twenty-eight other states remain committed to the model. The Ohio RPS was passed with nearly unanimous bi-partisan support. We are now asking lawmakers to let the freeze expire and to vote down attempts to extend it under the guise of “voluntary” standards. We urge this committee to reject House Bill 554.

I appreciate your time and consideration today. I welcome any questions the committee may have.